

# The CEA CRITIC

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## Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting of the Association will be held at Stanford University, the evening of Sept. 6th, in the Education Auditorium. The program is being arranged and will be announced soon.

## Moral Uplift? Metrical Maze?

As a professor of English, I suppose that my own reactions to the teaching of poetry are typical. When the time comes in Freshman English for me to invoke the Muse, my eyes light up with a gleam otherwise absent. I gird up my loins and set out on a crusade against the powers of darkness. In a word, I love poetry, and I assume that we all do. I am, however, convinced that most of us either kill the thing we love or at the very least mangle it pretty badly. The average student, in high school or college, finding himself confronted with poetry, is either indifferent, or suspicious, or contemptuous. It is a difficult business to beguile him, to trap him, and to hog-tie him, a business that I wish were better understood. I have two main objections to the manner in which poetry is almost universally taught in the introductory courses of secondary school and colleges: it is taught as a series of neat, quotable expressions of noble thoughts; it is taught as metrics.

Under the Moral Uplift system, Longfellow ranks high. When I was a schoolboy, "Excelsior" was held up for my admiration, and I was made to feel that it was a very splendid thing indeed to gasp out my life somewhere above the timber line clutching an enigmatic banner. Similarly, I was told that the aesthetic effect of the sands of time would be improved by the addition of a set of my footprints. The conclusion of the matter in both cases was that the poem in question was a fine one, a conclusion with which I can no longer agree. In these two poems Longfellow may well be compared to the trumpet player in a Salvation Army band; his spiritual earnestness outruns his technical ability (lest I be misunderstood, I must add that I think Longfellow wrote many fine poems). A less objectionable variation of this system is the concentration on the thought content of a poem, which is often reduced to a prose

paraphrase. Certainly a student ought to be required to know what the poem is about, and certainly a paraphrase is a useful kind of theme, which can be graded for diction and all the other mechanics. The trouble is that far too many times the thought of the poem, or the idea lying behind the poem, is made synonymous with the poem itself. The student then comes to regard a poem as an elaborate way of saying something that the silly author might just as well have said simply and directly.

Under the Metrical Maze system, matters are even worse. To appeal again to my own school-boy experience, I can remember that when I was studying algebra, I learned to juggle formulae without having the remotest idea of what the letters were meant to stand for. The process was at times a game and at times a puzzle, but it was never an assimilation of the principles of mathematics. This is, I think, a close analogy to the process of metrical analysis. The student often becomes quite skillful in working out a hieroglyphic pattern, but the pattern exists as an entity independent of the poem. When an occasional student does bring the two things together in his mind, he is apt to think that they are identical, and he arrives by a different route at his familiar destination — a poem is something essentially simple that is arbitrarily complicated by a tangle of rhymes, inverted accents, hypermetrical syllables and other monstrosities. The poem becomes a diagram instead of a chime of bells. Again I must beg not to be misunderstood. I am not falling into the either-or fallacy. The problem is a matter of emphasis; of what to do first; of making poetry meaningful and delightful to the tyro. I should, for example, expect a college senior majoring in English to know all about the metrics of the various kinds of sonnets, but I should not care if the beginner did not know what a sonnet was, so long as he was somehow induced to enjoy reading a poem that happened to be a sonnet. Suppose you were trying to get an experienced listener to enjoy Beethoven's Fifth Symphony; would you begin by insisting that he memorize the fact that it was written in the key of C minor and in 2/4 time? Only if you were in desperate search of a specific question to ask on an examination, an unworthy motive

not unheard of in literary circles.

The musical illustration has brought me to my constructive suggestion. Let us not forget that poetry is essentially music; that it is an emotional experience in which the sound is a vital factor. The language of poetry is to use the jargon of semantics— affective language, but it does not and cannot affect us if it is merely seen and not heard. Let us remember that most students have never heard poetry in their lives, except for Mother Goose jingles. Moreover they cannot hear it by looking at the printed page any more than they can hear music by looking at the notes. It follows that they must begin to hear it in the class room. Therefore the instructor must learn how to read it himself, and this art is not in the curriculum of any Ph D. mill or school of education. He cannot read poetry by the light of nature any more than he can play the violin. Once he has learned how to read well, he has a powerful classroom weapon. After a poem has been thoroughly discussed, let him read it to the class. He will get applause, which is gratifying but unimportant. The important fact is that the poem has come alive and has sunk deep. Ideally, perhaps, a poem should be memorized by the student and then recited, but only if the poem has been thoroughly mastered, and if the recitation is made something more than parrot-like. The student would then come to share to some extent in the process of artistic creation, and poetry would cease to be that repellent thing Art and would become pleasure.

Theodore H. Banks,  
Wesleyan University

## For the Love of Poetry

Supporting its belief that the good reading of good poetry deserves to be encouraged, the English Club of the Newark Colleges of Rutgers University recently conducted its eleventh annual poetry reading contest.

From forty high schools in northern New Jersey students came to Newark eager to read so as to give pleasure to others, eager to demonstrate the beauty to be found in the quietly intelligent reading of a good poem.

(N. E. Meeting, Page 4)

## The English Program and General Education

(Delivered more fully on October 30, 1948, at the organization meeting of the Southeastern Pennsylvania section of the COLLEGE ENGLISH ASSOCIATION)

What are the usual practices and responsibilities of our college English departments? What is "General Education"? How can teachers and departments of English adjust their work to the new curricula?

Some years ago Mr. Robert Spiller formulated for the National Council of Teachers of English the following statement of the functions of "an average department of English in a liberal-arts college":

1. To give to all students an ability to use their own language as a tool for writing, reading, and speaking in the ordinary pursuits of life

2. To give to any student in the college who may desire it, whether an English major or not, an experience in culture, self-discovery, or whatever other vague but legitimate objective may be served by an experience with an art on the part of a non-artist

3. To give to English majors a positive understanding of literary art and a knowledge of English or of English, American, and related literatures.

This generally acceptable statement suggests, first, the extreme difficulty of our task. If an English department could accomplish these hard things, and if other departments, under leadership as enlightened as ours, could reach their corresponding goals, we should have in our college something like "General Education" itself, if not the millennium.

Mr. Spiller's statement suggests further that the part of our work most directly related to "general culture" is likely to be somewhat vague in aim and methods and almost certainly elective or fortuitous in application. With these non-English-major students we are especially uncertain what we want to do, and many of them are not at all uncertain as to what they want to do with us.

These two considerations add up, I think, to the tentative conclusion that, within its field and in proportion to its success, the work of a representative Eng-

(Continued on Page 5)

# THE CEA CRITIC

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Association \$2.00 a year, of which \$1.50  
is for subscription of the CEA CRITIC.  
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## Other Voices

Although I attended the New  
England meeting from begin-  
ning to end, I came away not  
worn out but refreshed.

Mrs. Margaret W. French  
Lasell Junior College

The report of the New Eng-  
land meeting suggests that we in  
the Midwest need this sort of  
thing.

Donald B. Youel  
State Teachers College  
Mankato, Minn.

## GROUP MEETINGS

CEA meeting in Chicago, Ill.  
Inst. Tech., Sat., April 30. See  
March CRITIC.

Indiana CEA Meeting, Fri. and  
Sat., May 13, 14, Purdue, Lafayette,  
Ind.

Other territories open for ag-  
gressive agents. Editor.

## AYE AND NAY

I have enjoyed the CRITIC,  
particularly the discussion of the  
Ph. D. program and the recent  
criticism of T. S. Eliot. May I  
add my amen. The letter from  
the gentleman in Alabama, I  
believe, was perfectly absurd.

The CRITIC is the only pro-  
fessional paper I have ever seen

which seems to have its feet on  
the ground. The tone is candid  
and realistic. I read it from  
beginning to end and save it.

Charles R. Boak  
State Teachers College  
Edinboro, Penna.

I pay my dues again with con-  
siderable reluctance. The reason  
is that I am shocked, yes, that's  
the word, by the silly editorial  
"Even, and Particularly, Mr.  
Eliot." If this sort of stuff  
represents anything like a  
"policy" of the CEA CRITIC,  
then it is time I bowed out.  
Whatever one may think of Mr.  
Eliot's political views, he is a  
great poet and a great critic  
whose influence on a whole  
writing generation is patent  
enough. Your editorial writer's  
synopsis of Mr. Eliot's critical  
method is a caricature. Surely,  
too, that last paragraph must  
have been taken from some  
other piece and attached here  
by mistake. It begins with the  
false assumption that Mr. Eliot's  
work is not concerned with  
moral values and ends with a  
plea for the study of the kind of  
literature which can please ev-  
eryone.

Willard Thorp  
Princeton University

No mistake. The editorial  
asks, "What is Mr. Eliot's place  
in the Democratic culture he has  
renounced, he, the apostle of  
those who distrust Democracy  
and the art which it nourishes  
and the education which must  
nourish it?" But all good writ-  
ing is moral—"indirectly moral"  
to use Theodore Spencer's phrase  
—"even, and particularly, Mr.  
Eliot's." The editorial does  
question whether Mr. Eliot's  
poetry, or his "values," or the  
critical method and interpreta-  
tion which his poetry seems to  
have inspired has much signifi-  
cance in publicly supported  
higher education, for all stu-  
dents, in all colleges. And in-  
directly the editorial wonders  
whether college English teach-  
ers, under the protection of a  
universal requirement, have suc-  
ceeded in making their new,  
vastly enlarged, public feel the  
humanizing values which they  
know are in their subject mat-  
ter. Is there a greater challenge  
before them? Editor

## JOHNSON AND NETHERCOT

Johnson's pungent article,  
"Heavens, He's Moral" deserved  
to be all on Page 1; and not  
simply because in my old age I  
begin to find myself, with con-  
siderable surprise, feeling that  
morals are a discussable sub-  
ject. Johnson seems to have the  
right (i.e., my) idea about liter-  
ature.

Nethercot's question as to  
tangible results from the  
CRITIC is natural, interesting,  
and not quite futile, since you  
may get one or two letters  
acknowledging definite debt to  
ideas gotten from it. It would  
be improbable if a thousand  
ideas sent to a thousand teachers  
should result in a million abso-  
lute duds. But education is not  
the simple stimulus-reaction  
process which Professor Nether-  
cot seems to be asking for; new  
methods come from minds pre-  
pared by much thought and  
varied reading; handing on the  
torch is too simple a metaphor.  
Of course good teaching depends  
on good teacher, but is the old  
assignment-recitation or lecture-  
examination method unimprov-  
able? Lastly there is the value  
of change itself; even if the new  
method is in itself no better for  
the student, it certainly is good  
for the teacher to approach his  
subject from a new angle.

Morse Allen  
Trinity College  
Hartford, Conn.

The "New Critics" have cer-  
tainly helped all of us to be  
better readers of poetry, and we  
are grateful. Yet many of us  
share Professor Reynolds' (Sept.  
'48 CRITIC) uncertainty that  
rhetorical analysis is enough.  
We are not willing to return to  
"pant and palpitation." We are  
not content to teach literature  
as a course in things in general  
... Incisive analyses of contem-  
porary poetics can lift the  
CRITIC far above the level of  
complaints about freshman com-  
position which so often seem to  
be the best that the mail brings  
to the editor.

Donald B. Youel

## CREDO

The last number of the CRITIC  
was interesting. Your incipient  
controversy with Hoepfner sug-  
gests that a certain amount of  
militancy and plain speaking is  
good journalism. I hope it will  
go on. Nethercot's letter really  
gets down to brass tacks, and I  
hope it will elicit replies. I agree  
with the latter to the extent of  
admitting that what I read and  
hear about English teaching  
makes little difference in my own  
ways and means. Whether it  
should is another matter. I'm  
afraid my own philosophy of  
teaching is pretty simple, amount-  
ing to something like the follow-  
ing:

(1) Have a good time in class  
and see that your students have  
one, too.

(2) Never hesitate to say that  
you like or dislike a book, but if  
you do be sure to show that your  
attitude is personal and not oracu-  
lar.

(3) If the pursuit of knowledge  
is exciting and adventurous (as  
it of course is), make your stu-  
dents feel that it is.

(4) Laugh a good deal.

(5) Aim all the time at "audi-  
ence participation."

(6) Eschew sarcasm.

(7) Give grave consideration  
to any opinion, if it seems hon-  
est.

(8) If a student needs to be  
slaughtered, let the class do it  
if possible.

(9) Treat your students as ad-  
ults, but young adults. Don't try  
to make them middle-aged before  
their time.

(10) Keep in mind all the time  
that literature is an aspect of  
life. Whenever possible draw  
contemporary comparisons.

There are a few dozen more of  
them.

Sincerely,  
R. M. GAY

## Somewhere in Oklahoma

This is a late report to the  
CEA from its "Editor Emeritus"  
as he rambled from college to  
college making classroom visits,  
talking to writing groups and  
taking part in faculty "round ta-  
bles." Two recent experiences in  
particular might be of interest  
to your readers, and one of them  
should have been reported long  
ago, since it actually took place  
under the direction of one of the  
present CEA Board of Directors  
and was in some degree an out-  
growth of CEA counsels.

In early January I attended a  
joint meeting of the State Uni-  
versity English teaching staff and  
the city high school English  
teachers in Albuquerque, New  
Mexico. This was not the first  
such get-together in that city,  
and evidently it will not be the  
last. The occasion was a Satur-  
day luncheon, notable for good  
food, good company and good  
fellowship. After lunch the  
group was addressed by your Di-  
rector, Dr. T. M. Pearce, Chair-  
man of the University English  
Department, by your Editor Em-  
eritus, and by Miss Barbara Phil-  
lips of the High School. Each in-  
formal talk was designed to stim-  
ulate discussion of the common  
objectives of college and high  
school English teaching, and ap-  
parently succeeded in doing so.  
Forty-three teachers were pres-  
ent, 13 from the High School and  
29 from the University, and one  
outlander.

The discussion which followed  
was practical and meaty, and  
drew out such widespread par-  
ticipation as to make the meet-  
ing distinctly worthwhile. Other  
such conferences will un-  
doubtedly follow.

Early in March I visited Texas  
Technological College, and was



# WOULD I

## Again?\*

By Elizabeth W. Manwaring,

Professor of English Composition, Emeritus



"The only wisdom we can hope to acquire  
Is the wisdom of humility . . ."

T. S. ELIOT, "East Coker"

My title and text require two lines of Mr. Eliot's context:

There is at best but a limited value to the  
knowledge derived from experience . . .  
Do not let me hear of the wisdom of old men,  
but rather of their folly . . .

My favorite line from E.A.R. is that sorrowful admission of  
Yseult of Brittany's aged father:

Wisdom was never learned at any knees.

Nevertheless will you listen with what tolerance you can muster to some reflections of age,—product of forty years' trying to teach Rhetoric and English Composition? Such are the names in the Wellesley Catalogue of my beginning assistantship and ultimate professorship, in association with a minor in English Literature, and just once with English Language.

In the long winter evenings of 1947-1948 there was time for recollections and regrets, mingled with occasional complacencies. The time was less than I had expected, because committees and correspondence continue, I warn you, even into the Emeritus status. Those letters and callers who pampered complacency were pleasant; but there came at times the humbling thought that the appreciators were but an inconsiderable fraction of the thousands—yes, after forty years, they are appallingly thousands—who sat before me with seeming respect and took down something in notebooks—usually the wrong thing: the hasty side remark which was too ill-considered for such undesirable semi-permanence. There was even an appreciator—deriving from days of the shirt waist with detachable collar—who said with agreeable fervor, "You were our favorite teacher freshman year"—pause, while I looked receptive—"You always wore *clean* collars!"

There seems pitifully little surviving from the hours of advice, and from the tons of themes which cost so much labor to writers and reader. A few gratifying memories do break in, as of that mathematically inclined freshman whose erroneous ideas of style persisted until spring, when something, perhaps the freshly burgeoning leaves, inspired her to write at last an artless and sincere bit of her real self. To the commendation given she replied, face glowing, "Oh, you want me to write it the way I would say it!" She is now the valued secretary to one of our

most distinguished and busy university presidents, recognized by him as an invaluable helper. I think of other secretaries—one to a high railroad official, who helped me get a reservation for one of our administration when conditions of travel were at their worst; of a librarian in one of our chief colleges for women, who avowed that a two-hour course in narrative-writing in her junior year had been of particular use to her in her job; of teachers and scholars, not only in the field of English, in many a college and school; of journalists whose work has the honor of a by-line; of editors and professional writers of all sorts of publications, from cook-books and detective stories (one had an English professor for detective) to biographies, novels, poems and works of science. But a sense of failure comes over me in this second batch of long winter evenings on which I am entering when I read those over-numerous articles in professional journals, on what is wrong with the teaching of English. The sense of failure is deepened by my dearly-bought knowledge that none of the writers knows, or at least expresses half of what I know to be wrong with it; and there is only slight comfort in reminding myself that a great deal is wrong also with the teaching of some other subjects; perhaps even with one or two of the subjects themselves as too vaguely defined and too uncertain of value to hold such large place as they do in a liberal arts program.

Certainly, compared with Rhetoric they are parvenu. The liberal art of Rhetoric has an ancient and distinguished origin and a proud tradition. (Aristotle's valuable text-book would probably, if published today, receive the comment, "This text is on a new principle".) If Rhetoric goes back also to the sophists, at least Sophocles is its great exponent; and what teacher in Rome had higher honor than Quintilian? If Oxford and Cambridge, Harvard and Yale, have slighted and even condemned the art, and assumed that it was to be taught by a tutor in any subject, other great universities in our country hold it in esteem. The Scottish universities maintain it in high place; in the great tradition of Blair and Bain and Minto they have had for over half a century Sir Herbert Grierson. One of the most profitable textbooks which I have come upon is his *Rhetoric and English Composition*, published at Edinburgh in 1944. I quote as a valuable reminder of our main business his definition of the subject:

Rhetoric is the study of how to express oneself most correctly and effectively, having in mind the nature of the language used, the subject we are speaking or writing on, the kind of audience we have in view, and the purpose, which last is predominant.

\* A talk given at the meeting of the New England branch of the College English Association at Harvard University, November 27, 1948, at Old Seaver's Hall, in the room where Dean Briggs and Eliza Ferry lectured.

No wonder, considering this clear jargonless definition, that Sir Herbert stresses the tradition of his teacher, Bain, in practicing much close analysis of prose passages. One of my greatest failures, I sadly realize, was expending far too little time on such analysis. It is a poor excuse that I had little or none of such practice in my own school and college days.

I shall make no bones of using the first personal pronoun, for, I trust, your benefit. An interview with Mr. Eliot in a recent *New York Times Book Review* quotes him as saying, "One of the pleasures of growing old is that you don't worry about dignity." Bearing in mind those discouragements to aged advisers quoted at the opening, I will recount some of my other grounds for humility, in the unconquerable hope that some few of you may profit by a bad example, if only you get it early.

Not until I was too old to eradicate ingrained habits without great pain, if at all, was I informed that I "er"-ed noticeably, talked too fast, and too often dropped my voice at sentence-ends. No one ever did tell me—I read it in the slightly glazed look of some of my front-seaters—that I talked too much. How I wish that I had oftener put in practice one of the wisest pedagogical counsels I ever received (it was from Albert S. Cook of Yale, well known for his Socratic questioning): "Don't tell the student. Get him to tell you. He will not remember what you tell him; he will remember what you induce him to tell you." That I do remember what Professor Cook told us is beside the point; he had touched one of the chief defects in the teaching of all too many of us. We not only lecture too much; we *prattle* to a too-readily appreciative (or seemingly appreciative) class, which slyly looks at its respective watches and notes that time for its own participation is passing. I have sometimes wished that talking was accompanied by a severe pain in the tongue.

Other humbling memories are of classes to which I went with no clear idea of the terminus I ought to arrive at, nor the spacing of midway points on the journey. The bell rang at what was clearly not a train stop, and the class straggled forth, gabbling on the threshold, "What did she say we have for next time?"

There are warnings in the nightmare switched to in the course of my career; and in contrast to certain advertisers, I will give both ends of the switch. In my first years of teaching I would dream intermittently for the week or two before the opening class that more or less confidently I began to lecture, and had said all I had prepared (and all I could improvise) in the first ten minutes. This nightmare is not peculiar to teachers of English; but the nightmare which occurred when I had been teaching for a decade or more is, I suspect, such as only a teacher of English (or maybe history or philosophy) could have. In this, the bell for the end of the class rang just as I was finishing my opening remarks. What is the meaning of a third form which coincided with my last two or three years of service? In this, the opening term had progressed to perhaps the third week, and I had been proceeding as usual. Suddenly, looking at my schedule card, I realized that there was one class I had never met at all. It was clearly time to retire.

In my last years of teaching I underwent the humbling experience of chairmanship. At least I tried to save from my own ills the younger members of our staff, enduring and causing them to endure, for the general good as well as for their own, a series of visits, a letter and a conference. Never had I a more distasteful job; but in the second year (for I carried it on to the second and in one instance to the third year) I almost always had the satisfaction of finding specific faults amended, new teaching habits started, heads up, voices firmer, and class looking relatively interested and participating more freely. And those who had not improved at least could not complain that they were unwarned of their non-reappointment (to use the statey term in vogue with us).

For that fate there are many reasons, of which it is hard to make the young M.A. or Ph.D. aware. Too many of them are ill-equipped in grammar, English or Latin; in knowledge of rhetorical terms and principles; in classical languages; in the history and earlier forms of English and other modern languages. For these reasons they are incompetent to deal wisely with students who bring to college as English linguistic baggage only the notions that a preposition is not a word to end a sentence with, and an infinitive must never, never be split. A stiff examination in Fowler's *Modern English Usage* might well be required of all beginning teachers of rhetoric. The lessening or entire omission from the life of students today of reading aloud

is far from compensated by frequent acting in second-, third-, and fourth-rate plays. Far too many of our young teachers are ill-equipped in voice, in enunciation, in pronunciation. And like most young Americans of the last twenty years they have suffered under a variety of jargons which blunt their standards of precision and elegance, and certainly of truth. Perhaps we may hope for eventual amelioration of some of these. Mr. Maverick's article on Gobbledygook is given in full in Rudolf Flesch's *Plain Talk*, which has much else that is good, though it is not to be swallowed whole. A book just published at Chapel Hill entitled *Federal Prose* is going to have another purchaser as soon as I can find time to order it, if this jewel is representative:

Under multiplicity of personnel assigned either concurrently or consecutively, to a single function, there results deterioration of quality in the resultant product as compared with the product of the labor of an exact sufficiency of personnel.

Do you get it? "Too many cooks spoil the broth." The active verb and concrete noun are in direr need of rescue today than when "Q" couched a lance against the Boyg of woolly words. The current practice of the four-letter word such as brings books into court seems to me but another form of unfeeling jargon.

I have not named all the professional diseases which I fear I have illustrated in my own worst practice, as I have been aware of them in my colleagues. Substitution of "current events" and personal opinions on public questions for the business of rhetoric; lapses into personal anecdote instead of bearing down on sentence and paragraph structure; lack of clearness and failure to make sure that one is clear; dull or mannered vocabulary; self-dramatization, so pitifully easy on a platform. Perhaps the unforgivable sin is inadequate respect for the student as a person, which shows in contemptuous references behind their backs or face to face, but is less harmful so than in well-intentioned attempts to over-edit the student's written words instead of trying—a harder job, but more useful to the student—to find out what he means or almost means, and helping him to make it clear. Courtesy and generosity, patience except where there is genuine grounds for impatience with slack and insincere product; effort to speak clearly, agreeably, and with fullest respect for the Word, the expression of thought and feeling, which we have the privilege of helping the student to control—these are hard to keep in active practice day after tiring day. I have tried often to analyze the secret of the best teaching I ever knew. With one it was skilful questioning which woke the torpid mind; with another it was the brilliantly varied attack on each day's problem—unpredictable, stimulating, exciting; at very best it was having more expected of me than I felt I ever could accomplish; and the very expectation brought about the accomplishment. Always there is some indescribable personal factor. A well-known surgeon once told me of his experiences under some of the famous English teachers here at Harvard twenty-five years ago. He ran through the list, Greenough, Kittredge, Lowes; then he paused, and tried to find a precise word. "Ah," he said finally, "but Bliss Perry! He *did something* to a room when he came into it that none of the rest did."

I return to Mr. Eliot's *Quartets* for a statement of the ideal of us who are so often conscious of failure in our high function, but, let us hope,

... are only defeated  
Because we have gone on trying . . .  
And every phrase and sentence that is right  
(Where every word is at home . . .  
The word neither diffident nor ostentatious,  
An easy commerce of the old and the new,  
The common word exact without vulgarity,  
The formal word precise but not pedantic,  
The complete consort dancing together) . . .

Would I again? Though my failures a second time might be greater, and the fraction of the responsive among my students yet smaller; though I should have even less chance to teach the subject for which I was really best prepared and never did teach; though the obstacles set in the way of the teacher of rhetoric by committees of colleagues who think reading and writing come by nature were yet more discouraging; yes, I would.



invited to address the English Workshop, a group made up of English teachers in the college and the local high school. Lubbock, Texas, is a young city which has had a phenomenal growth; the population is now 70,000, and the schools are crowded to overflowing. The College is 23 years old, and already enrolls about 7000 students, a high percentage from the surrounding neighborhood. It is not necessary to tell English teachers that in such a situation there are difficult problems shared by college and high school alike.

The reason for this brief communication is not to report even briefly the substance of the remarks by prepared and impromptu speakers at these two meetings, but to urge that such friendly get-togethers take place more frequently, not only in urban colleges and universities, but in rural colleges, where English teachers at the high school level in all the surrounding area might attend. Such meetings should be a joint enterprise confined to those actually engaged in teaching, not brought together to listen to administrators. They should be highly informal, preeminently social, and encourage lively impromptu discussion.

—Burgess Johnson

### PH.D.'S CAN TEACH

Please, dear Mr. Editor, some of us Ph. D's think that we can teach! We're not all stuffy old souls, who never cracked anything but a degree. Some of us, dear sir, have enough intelligence to learn how to teach, even if the university didn't instruct us. And some of us like people as well as books. In fact, there may be others, like me, who underwent the discipline of the degree during depression years only because it was then the only key to a college position. So please don't keep looking down your nose at all of us as stodgy old hat pegs. Soon you'll be making us all apologetic for our alphabetical suffixes.

One serious note. How about requiring these recalcitrant doctors of yours to teach for a few years in a high school before they undertake college work? They'll learn first principles there! And if they can't succeed in such a position, then let them go write books and not clutter up any part of the educational system.

Josephine E. Roberts  
Grove City College

N. E. Meeting, see page 4.

### DEVICE

Does anyone have a working device for securing college-wide insistence upon use of acceptable English? Good usage should be the concern of teachers in all departments. Presumably they are all competent in the rudiments of grammar, spelling, and sentence structure, just as the English staff knows the multiplication table, three or four principal dates in American history, the composition of water, and what a syllogism is. (Or do I give too much credit all around?) Anyhow, concerted demand for simple accuracy and clarity might help both students and faculty.

Name Witheld by Request

The CRITIC has a "Read Me" look.

Harold Wentworth

### Massacres the Season

Mr. Wilbur Dunkel (The CEA CRITIC, February) sounds somewhat like Vivien who left "Not even Lancelot brave nor Galahad clean."

He goes farthest astray with THE RESPECTFUL PROSTITUTE, somewhat wilfully stressing a very minor point and misunderstanding that. This is not a play "dealing with the problem of lynching" nor is it "confused" since it deals directly with the problem of the underprivileged—here negroes and prostitutes—who are submissive to the class that keeps them underprivileged, who are held in subjection because of their respect for the class which oppresses them, who long desperately to be respected, even noticed by those they abjectly recognize as their superiors, whose subordinate position is hopeless as long as they acquiesce in it. Mr. Dunkel has seen this play but not heard it.

Nor has he heard properly either EDWARD, MY SON or THE MADWOMAN OF CHAILLOT, both of which reward the reader and both of which are in print. The former will almost certainly be included in future classroom anthologies for it reads very well indeed and has in it qualities which lift it out of the class of plays made satisfying mainly by "superlative acting." It has a quality called by Robert Morley "a golden thread" which is a parent's very genuine love for his son, the universal desire of all parents to express that love in gifts, in making the world their children's "oyster."

And THE MADWOMAN OF CHAILLOT is a moving drama of the perennial struggle of good and evil. Here are the "insight,

### I'VE BEEN READING

Members are invited to contribute reviews of books, old or new, which they wish to call to the attention of other English teachers. Professor J. Gordon Eaker, the Associate Editor, is in charge of I'VE BEEN READING. He is Head, Department of English, Jersey City Junior College, Jersey City, N. J.

Comments on reviews will be welcomed.

A Study of Literature for Readers and Critics by David Daiches, Ithaca, N. Y.: Cornell University Press, 1949, 233 pp. index, \$2.75.

Beginning with the question, "Why do you spend time reading and discussing books which tell of events which never in fact occurred?" and aiming his discussion, somewhat waveringly, at the "common reader," Mr. Daiches attempts to bring up to date the great classical answers: Aristotle's answer is no longer satisfactory, either to the critic or to the reader, since today we must consider the effects of widespread printing and, especially, a semi-literate reading public.

Mr. Daiches begins his search with an investigation of the literary use of language, as distinguished from that of philosophy or history or science, a use which makes its effect through "the time dimension" (i.e., plot) or through "counterpointing" (i.e., symbol). With such differentiation, he is ready to discuss fiction on one hand and poetry on the other. And on the basis of his fundamental discovery, that "literature" communicates unique insights in unique ways, he is also prepared to set up a hierarchy of values in literary works. He devotes some space to lower-grade but legitimate literary pleasures, showing that even from them the more carefully trained reader gets greater pleasure than does the semi-literate one. The sample analyses, although they stress English classics above the contemporary literature which he is helping us to find our way in, are helpful and interesting.

Chester H. Cable.  
Wayne University

and understanding of man's plight in the present situation" and all situations that Mr. Dunkel fails to find anywhere in the current season.

Louise Schutz Boas  
Wheaton College

### Kenyon School

Despite the tragic fire, the Kenyon School of English will hold its second session this summer as announced. June 23 to August 6.

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**University of Wyoming** — Experimental introduction to Language Course for freshmen in lieu of regular grammar-composition class.

**Tulsa University**—From Donald E. Hayden: "An experiment is the 'Tulsa University of the Air.' We are in on the NBC Theater program and the NBC Music program — one class on the air Saturday, the other Sunday. A half hour lecture by a member of the English department precedes the play—or the music—and two hours' credit is given in each course. The department also offers other courses over the University station KWGS-FM. These are broadcast direct from the classroom with regularly enrolled students as well as the radio audience. A course in Sociology, one in 'General Appreciation' and another in 'Music Appreciation' are also offered.

## Publications:

"**American Quarterly** will attempt to find the common area of interest in which specialists of various kinds and the aware reader may meet. It will publish articles, of a speculative, critical, and informative nature, which will assist in giving a sense of direction to studies in the culture of America, past and present. Contributors, academic or non-academic, will write for the lay reader who wishes to avoid the thinness of much popularization and the excesses of ingrown specialization. The first issue presents various aspects of American world influences. The second issue, to appear in June, will present articles that treat some of the principles of naturalism and the way they inform art, literature, and the movies." Published by Univ. of Minnesota, Exec. Editor, William Van O'Connor; Board, Merle Curtis, Laurence Schmeckbeier, Herbert Schneider, Henry Nash Smith, Paul S. Taylor, Rupert Vance. Vol. 1, No. 1 now out, and a good one it is.

## New England Meeting

University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Massachusetts, May 7, 1949.

9:30-10:00: Registration, Room D, Old Chapel.

10:00-12:15: Session I. Auditorium, Old Chapel.

Chairman: Howard R. Patch, Smith College.

Greetings: Ralph A. Van Meter, President, University of Massachusetts.

Walter L. Simmons, Rhode Island State College, President, New England Region, College English Association.

Discussion: Rene Wellek, Yale University.

**The Impasse of Literature History.**

Ernest Bernbaum, Jaffrey, New Hampshire.

**What Does the Nature of Literature Require of Its Interpreters?**

Frederick S. Troy, University of Massachusetts, discussion leader.

Anna J. Mill, Mount Holyoke College, discussion leader.

12:45-2:00: Luncheon, Cafeteria, Butterfield Hall.

Chairman: Frank Prentice Rand, University of Massachusetts.

Speakers: Reginald T. Cook, Middlebury College.

## American Literature and the Humanities.

Wilbert Snow, Wesleyan University.

## Of Modern Poetry.

2:30-3:45: Session II. Auditorium, Jones Library.

Chairman: Stanley T. Williams, Yale University.

Discussion: George F. Whicher, Amherst College.

**A Course in Problems in American Civilization.**

Lloyd Haberly, University of Massachusetts Fort Devens, discussion leader.

3:45-5:00: Session III. Auditorium, Jones Library.

Chairman: Warren Smith, Rhode Island State College.

Discussion: Kenneth Burke, Bennington College, and the Institute for Advanced Studies.

**Critical Theory and Teaching Practice.**

George Armour Craig, Amherst College, discussion leader.

5:00-5:45: Literary Tour of Amherst.

6:00-7:00: Dinner, informal Lord Jeffery Inn.

7:30-8:30: Meeting. Auditorium, Jones Library.

Chairman: Roswell G. Ham, President, Mount Holyoke College.

## APPOINTMENT BUREAU

The services of the Bureau are available to C. E. A. members only. Annual registration fee is \$3.00. Address—College English Association, Brooklyn College, Brooklyn 10, New York. Telephone—Gedney-4-6379.

## SOME SEPTEMBER OPENINGS:

Location	Rank	Requirements	Salary
1. Indiana (church col.)	Inst. (M. or W.)	Ph. D.	c. \$3500
2. Calif. (church col.)	Open (M.)	Ph. D.	\$3000-\$4500
3. Maine (tech)	Inst. (M.)		\$2900
4. New York (teachers col.)	Inst. M. or W.)	M. A.	\$3000-\$3900
5. Illinois	Assoc. Prof. (M.)	Ph. D. + pubs.	Open
7. Pennsylvania	Inst. (M.)		Open
8. Indiana	Temporary, 1 yr. (M. or W.)	Recog. in field	Open
	Inst. (M. or W.), Ph. D.	+ pubs.	\$3000-\$3500

Members interested in any of these openings may have further information about them by registering with the Bureau. Please refer to the position by the number used in the listing above.

## BUREAU IN CALIFORNIA

On September 6, 7, 8, and 9, the Appointment Bureau will maintain offices in Rooms 54 and 55, Stanford University. Both rooms are only a few steps from the registration desk for MLA members, and they will be most conveniently located for those who wish to make use of the Bureau. Please pass the word.

## Sections Three and Five

In this class, I am one who loves to teach:

We read, we write, we feed, we fight, we score;  
We think of things we never thought before.

In that class, I am only known as teacher,  
Which is, for most, equivalent to preacher,  
And preacher is equivalent to bore.

What makes a class? Teachers will never reach  
The springs that make an eachness out of each.

Marcia Lee Anderson  
Hollins College, Va.

Speakers: Mary Eleanor Prentiss, Wellesley College.

**Elizabeth W. Manwaring.**  
Elizabeth Drew, Smith College.

**Theodore Spencer.**

Karl Shapiro, Johns Hopkins University.

**The Poet in the Theatre.**

Among the discussion participants will be: Sydney R. MacLean, Mount Holyoke College.

E. George Mason, Williams College.

Robert M. Mattuck, Goddard College.

Kenneth O. Myrick, Tufts College.

All teachers of college English whether members of C.E.A. or not, are invited. Registration fee, \$1.00. All who intend to stay overnight in Amherst, and who have no accommodations, should get in touch at once with Mr. Robert Lane, Old Chapel, Univ. of Mass., Amherst, Mass.

## Colgate Workshop

An English Workshop for high school teachers will be included in the 1949 Colgate University Summer Session, July 5-August 13.

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(Continued from Page 1)  
lish department is General Education, but General Education not generally applied.

My first suggestion most good English departments are tough enough not to need: we should not too hastily assume the necessity of radical alteration in an already sound English program. General Education does not permit, much less does it require, the abandoning of our traditional aims. It does require, I think, the consolidation of the academic forces that make for a full humanity. Ours are the basic utility (English communication) and much of the basic tradition (the part of the Western tradition nearest home—the essential outlet to the larger stream.) What, then, is this General Education, of which we are a part but not the whole?

Apparently nobody knows. There is much descriptive statement, of course, but no generally acceptable definition. Some months ago a little book entitled TOWARD GENERAL EDUCATION attempted an omnibus definition which rounded off its cultural, moral, intellectual, and aesthetic aspects with the statement that General Education "encourages the proper practices of eating, sleeping, thinking, and playing . . ." Now it may be rather startling to be told that eating and sleeping are proper practices (have we not served them all along, unconscious of our pedagogic virtues?), but makers of philosophical definitions are (here and usually) more to be pitied than reproved. It is almost always so much easier to name the destination than to define the vehicle.

The same authors aver that "liberal arts colleges have been so preoccupied with the training of psychologists, chemists, and musicians, that they have neglected the education of the free man." With salutations to Milton and Montaigne, they seek to redirect attention to "humane values" by substituting the word "general" for the word "liberal." (Mr. Conant writes divertingly on the same alteration of terms: General Education is for "a multitude"; its name is more acceptable than "liberal education" to the common ear; if the study had concerned only Harvard College, GENERAL EDUCATION IN A FREE SOCIETY might well have been called "The Objectives of Liberal Education.") The tendency toward isolated specialism is present, of course, and strong. But the more an old and respectable college adds vocational courses, the more it is likely to insist on being called a "liberal arts" college. There is something very touching

about this worship of the Unknown God. And the counter-movement, if it only invokes the right divinities, may go far to counterbalance if not to correct our bent toward the wrong kind of vocationalism.

Some months ago, in a report on "Current Trends in Higher Education" (NEA) Mr. Hoyt Trowbridge characterized General Education as "the part of higher education which is considered to be useful and necessary for all . . . contrasted with the special training intended to prepare students for particular occupations. Its subject matter is the basic arts and sciences, and it pursues the traditional aims of the liberal college . . ." The report continued with a description of "four patterns of General Education" which have developed in our colleges: the "distributional" pattern (familiar in conventional "degree requirements"); the "remedial conception" (sub-college work for the ill-prepared); the "practical conception" (as in the General College of the University of Minnesota); and the "theoretical or cultural conception," as at Columbia, Chicago, and St. John's.

It is this fourth conception which has given us courses such as "Contemporary Civilization," "Great Books," "The Nature of the World and of Man"—interdepartmental, non-elective, conducted largely in discussion groups, and based upon the study of a large number of the greatest examples of literary, political, and scientific achievement. Scientists, especially, seem sceptical about the effectiveness of this "cultural" plan; and almost everybody else asks, "Can the teachers do it? Can the students stand it?"

The introductory definition of General Education in the famous Harvard report (*General Education in a Free Society*) is similar to that of Mr. Trowbridge, and seems to me unexceptionable; but two of its qualifying additions make me vaguely unhappy. From a certain point of view, says the report, "the aim of general education . . . is to provide a broad critical sense by which to recognize competence in any field"; and elsewhere: General Education is distinguished from special education "not by subject matter, but in terms of method and outlook." I should think it very unfortunate to make deliberate use of cultural courses for the purpose of developing any kind of critical competence whatsoever. As Woodrow Wilson thought of moral character, a critical sense is important, but it is a by-product of certain kinds of experience; to seek it directly is

to debase the very experience which might otherwise produce it. Education in wisdom and morals need not be a random adventure, but it cannot be a closely controlled experiment. Likewise, while method and outlook will certainly vary as we pass from general to special education, subject matter will sometimes vary too, and vary widely. Objects and books well worth studying for special purposes would often be third-rate, or worse, for General Education in the humanities. Not all things are equally worth teaching; and I see no reason why General Education should settle for less than the best.

The Harvard course called "Great Texts of Literature" aims, according to the report, at "the fullest understanding of the work read rather than of the men or periods represented, craftsmanship evinced, historic or literary development shown, or anything else." This seems to me the right approach not only to general courses in the humanities but also to most of our undergraduate courses in English and American literature; and it contains, in effect, my first suggestion to our departments of English. Invoking the protection of Benedetto Croce, Mr. Spingarn, and Mr. Cleanth Brooks, I submit that we should first make sure that we are really teaching literature, the work of art for its own sake, rather than dealing in biography, social backgrounds, literary categories, or philological fragmentation. Good teachers use these latter things where they are needed; but I suspect that others still dispense literary history, either because they think this is literature or because they think it more convincingly teachable than literature itself. In this latter notion especially, I like to think them wrong. In some classrooms the main action is a sort of duel between the professor and a monster with some twenty-five or fifty sophomore heads, with a passage of Keats flung down between them like a gage of battle; in others it is a fifty-two-minute bout between the Grand Old Man and the Good Grey Poet, with the class safely stowed in the ring-side seats. But if ever a great work of literature and even a third-rate teacher really team up (with the teacher as the junior member of the team, as he ought to be), the class may be in for a very different experience. Great Ajax with his spear and shield and Little Brother Teukros with his bow and arrow (ducking in and out to shoot and hide) were a terrific team. And it made astonishingly little difference that Teukros was a bastard.

Let us be sure that we are not refusing the aid of our ablest collaborators—the books we teach; and that when we use our historical scholarship we provide our work of art with a context and not a cortex.

My second suggestion is that we prayerfully try to make sure that our courses include only the works we really ought to teach, and none of those that need no teaching or deserve none. Organization is a grand thing, but the passion for symmetry and schematic completeness is a dangerous thing. It is natural to emphasize historically important writings, comfortable to stress your graduate-school speciality, consoling to realize that you have really "covered" Philip Freneau, and gratifying to know that you have ticked off every perceptible author of the period without missing a down-beat. But I think that we might well forego these satisfactions and agree to use our pitifully short time on those works the power and beauty of which have convinced us that our students (and we) really need them. And I look to the day when we may willingly include among the proudest products of our departments not merely the happy few who went to graduate school and delighted their new masters with the news that as undergraduates (under us) they had actually read all of **Clarissa Harlowe**.

As to first-year composition, the Harvard idea seems to me as excellent as it is obvious: the elimination of English A (as a course) and the basing of work in composition on the subject-matter of the first-year general course. The masses of heavy and significant reading with which students have been confronted in courses such as "Contemporary Civilization" and "Great Books" have aroused great interest, not unattended with groaning and gnashing of teeth. This seems to me an ideal situation for the practice of composition. I have no faith in the theory that students are especially likely to write well on familiar matters, because they are spared the pains of finding something to say and thus permitted to concentrate on expression. The saying and the thing said are not that easily separable. I should think that the necessity of writing about one's readings would greatly stimulate the effort to read with comprehension, and that having something to say (since expression can't exist in *vacuo*) might greatly improve the effect of one's writing. At least students might be rid of the idea that what they are trying to write is "Correct English."

The extensive and difficult readings in the new courses suggest one way in which English departments may supplement, if not correct, the practice of General Education. The attitude of any effective reader to prehensible, not repulsive; some of the children really reach for the Great Books and grapple them to their souls with whatever adhesive services they can manage; but for intensive and closely analytical reading there is, in these courses, simply no time. Here is an opportunity—though no new one. I would suggest—perhaps unnecessarily—that English teachers might well give renewed consideration to the aesthetic and disciplinary value of very close and analytical reading—the kind of reading which Mr. Cleanth Brooks and others have carried to such interesting extremes. It seems impossible to experience the full artistic impact of a great work without some such prolonged and close encounter; and it may be that in this kind of reading, and in the kind of composition I have mentioned, our students may find a discipline analogous to that of the lost art of classical translation.

My next suggestion is that we should seek to compensate as tactfully as we can the fallacy of the Common Cultural Denominator. There is quite possibly a tendency in General Education (as practised) to reduce literary works to their resemblances and students to those which are held to be their common qualities. I respect the "common core," but I fear an illegitimate leveling tendency; and I should like to regard our departments of English as special champions of an enlightened doctrine of individual differences. As Mr. Ransom says, a work of art is not a scientific generalization but a thing of infinite particularity. The same may be true of men—even undergraduates. And this implies a responsibility to identify and salvage the few best minds among our supplicants. Let us amend General Jacksonianism with a bit of Particular Jeffersonianism: it's all in the democratic family, and there should be no quarrel.

We should also seek to adjust a possibly excessive emphasis, in the theory of General Education, upon intellectualism, the critical faculty, and the history of ideas. The humanities, says the Harvard report, "appraise, judge, and criticize"; General Education seeks the abilities "to think effectively, to communicate thought, to make relevant judgments, to discriminate among values." None of these concatenated phrases says that one of our objectives is to cause

a student to have a certain experience; what all these formulae omit is experience itself. It is as if I should be invited to embark upon a desert-island experience with the latest glamour girl solely for the purpose of being wiser when I got home. We have to do with teaching works of art, and our students are somewhat more than critical instruments whose powers we are to train and sharpen against some future intellectual emergency.

General Education needs also (and assists) the work we can do in teaching creative writing and contemporary literature. Modern writings seem to be little used in the new courses, except perhaps as materials of social history, but our teaching of contemporary authors may be greatly helped by those general courses which are spreading, however thinly, a knowledge of the older authors and cultures. It may be that for the comprehension of the more difficult modern writers, notably the poets, a little knowledge of ancient and mediaeval works may be of more assistance to our students than all the courses we teach in English literature from Shakespeare to T. S. Eliot. As for creative writing—while we may rescue few otherwise mute, inglorious Miltons from oblivion, there is surely an important relationship between appreciation and even abortive creation; and once in a while we may find our man of parts.

My final suggestion is that the developing program of General Education may be in very great need of an imaginative conception of human history. President Chalmers of Kenyon College has given us an eloquent statement of the necessary corrective in the CEA Chapbook "Poetry and General Education." It has become increasingly clear that cultural or social history is the dominant theme if not the central discipline of General Education. Says President Conant, "Cultural history is the core of the core of general education." Says President Chalmers, "Either the understanding of ourselves is a constant and lively and ever-renewed obligation of reasonable men or it is not. If it is our obligation, the humanist is something far different from a transmitter of the past, and the subject of his studies is something far subtler and more profound than societies; it is nothing less than a human being."

Surely it is no debasement of the Muse of History to suggest that the arts and humane letters are not her handmaidens. Let us speak up for these other worthy ladies.—Francis C. Mason, Gettysburg College

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# Chap Book

Published by the

COLLEGE ENGLISH ASSOCIATION

BROOKLYN COLLEGE

In cooperation with Brandeis University

As a Supplement to THE CEA CRITIC

Vol. XI, No. 5, May, 1949

Durham, N. C.

## The Man of Letters and American Culture

By

LUDWIG LEWISOHN

Brandeis University

I am not unaware of the fact that I have chosen (happily at the suggestion and with the consent of your committee)<sup>1</sup> a difficult and intricate subject. It is a grave subject, too, and one very heavily freighted with meaning for our entire cultural situation. And so you will, I am sure, forgive me for the tentativeness and even desultoriness of the observations that follow.

If we are to speak of The Man of Letters in American Culture, we had better a little define our terms. For the man of letters, who is a man of scruples, who tests his acts as an artist, a thinker, even a citizen, before the interior court of his conscience, hardly exists among us today. A Sinclair Lewis who once wrote two greatly and perhaps permanently effective books and who has been re-writing those two books more feebly and noisily ever since is no man of letters; Pearl Buck who wrote one faintly beautiful book and then plunged down among the crowd of easy entertainers is no woman of letters. I name these two because the Swedish Academy, after its various aberrations, has just, as it were, come to its senses again, and given the Nobel Prize to Mr. T. S. Eliot, who is, according to the marks I have proposed, a true man of letters. His precise stature as poet, critic, thinker, is likely to fluctuate for long. But the man who wrote Ash Wednesday and sundry other poems as well as the essays "Tradition and the Indi-

1. This address was originally delivered before the New England College English Association, November 27, 1948.

vidual Talent", and "Religion and Literature", is evidently allied to the great tradition of the man of letters which I have in mind.

It may be useful to examine that tradition for a moment through a few of its great exemplars. And the figure that first comes to my mind, almost as type and symbol, is that of Milton. The one flawless poetic artist in the tongue we speak, he lost his eyesight in the service of the commonwealth; he descended into the arena to defend the rational liberties, both public and private, of man; he had a powerful and coherent vision of the sum of things that he strove to make to prevail. A certain severity of temper he used in seeking "to justify the ways of God to man" a saying which, rightly interpreted, may be taken as a summing-up of both man's and the man of letters' whole business in this world, is still resented by the dilettanti and the dabblers who, as Goethe tells us, "negate the master and try to make mastery appear to be egoism."

Let me dwell for a moment on this trick of the dilettanti and the dabblers. It has become more wide-spread in this age; its almost conspiratorial character in contemporary America abashes spirits of mediocre force and daring who might, in a kinder climate, have been men of letters on a moderate scale. But who among us will answer the dilettanti and the dabblers in the spirit of Andre Gide's magnificent notation: "*Je ne me savais d'abord si redoutable; mais: on me combat, donc je suis.*" ("I did not at first know myself to be so redoubtable; but: they fight me, hence I am.")? Who, in our apparently easy-going society, in our apparently almost jolly world of literary trafficking, would not wince at the jibe a reviewer addressed to Thomas Mann the other day? "No writer in this century," the reviewer (to whom I am coming back presently) wrote, "has won such universal admiration and none has felt himself more worthy of it." You get the implication of the sullen dilettante and dabbler. Greatness is "putting on side"; an occasional glimpse of it followed, as the dabbler could not know, by other moments of anguished doubt—this is resented as arrogant detachment from the gay crowd of purveyors of merchandise in the pseudo-literary market-places whose ambition was defined and written down forevermore by Jules Lemaitre in his precious execution of the novelist Georges Ohnet. "There is nothing in him that rises above his readers, nothing that shocks or eludes them. His novels are cut to their exact measure; M. Ohnet presents to them their own ideal. The banal cup he holds to their lips they can drink, they can drain it to the last drop." It is the Georges Ohnets among us whom the reviewers relish and really read. Yes, they do read them, in spite of Goethe's wry jest: "*Seit man die Buecher rezensirt, liest sie keir Mensch ausser dem Rezensenten, und der auch nur so, so.*" "Since book-reviewing has come up nobody reads books any more except the reviewer, and he only after a fashion." But from this very jest of



Goethe's you can see that the path of the man of letters was no flowery one in his age and country either.

He, indeed, is a better illustration of the character and temper and function of the man of letters for us than Milton. For Goethe, as Emerson saw with his exquisite clarity of vision—"Goethe is the pivotal man of the old and new times. He shuts up the old, he opens the new." The two-thousand poems, the whole of Faust, above all, the richly chronicled and commented experience of the man between earth and sky, are as fresh and pertinent to us as though he were in our very midst. We need not reinterpret him for our day and use. He is the great exemplar of the man of letters in the modern age. As profoundly as Milton he wanted his art to transform man, to cause his vision of perfection and of the perfect life within the world and the universe to prevail. Mournfully enough, therefore, he wrote to Zelter in 1804: "It is an evil thing in our time that the work of art which should first of all affect the living, finds itself, in so far as it is sound and worthy of eternity, in contradiction to the age, so that the true artist often lives in loneliness and despair, the while he is convinced that men are in search of the very thing he possesses and can communicate. Thus as he said, sundry of his works did not find an adequate audience, despite his great fame, until more than a decade after their composition; thus, too, he refused to have the second part of Faust published while he lived. For years the dilettantes and the dabblers had demanded "another Werther" of him. Doubtless he did not want to hear the complaint that the second Faust was not a replica of the first.

These difficulties of the great man of letters are never either old or new. Gide has set them down with great precision. "Each of my books is hostile to the admirers of the preceding one." And again: "In ten years it will be recognized that the qualities thrown up against a book of mine today, are its rarest ones." And these difficulties, it will be seen, spring directly from the character of the true man of letters: his scrupulousness as both artist and communicator of truth—if such a division is admissible; his inner research and deepening (*Vertiefung—approfondissement*) which makes each new work of his the expression of another and a ripper phase of his total being; his determination—unrelated to argument or polemic—to make his vision of the sum of things, "of man and nature and of human life", prevail. Thus he needs to persuade yet cannot stoop to please. He is immensely willing to yield to the demand of his day, to what Goethe called *die Forderung des Tages*, a phrase which significantly enough, Thomas Mann has chosen as the title of a volume of his essays. But it is hard for him, when his day, his age, does not make that demand upon him and seems to have no need of him or, what is worse and what, alas, is true of America today, treats him with the malice of self-contempt

projected outward or—and this is the lowest depth and the final degradation—sucks him into its swamps and literary morasses, as has happened before our eyes to two men as gifted and truly distinguished once upon a time as Mr. Somerset Maugham and Mr. Aldous Huxley.

Is there great need of adducing other examples of the man of letters? The "format" as Thomas Mann is fond of saying, may vary; the character remains the same amid sharpest variations in mood, form, temper. It remains the same in Swift and Johnson, in Lessing and Voltaire. The nineteenth century offers many examples through both feebleness and excesses, despite *both* genius and talent, tend to tarnish purity and fragmentize wholeness. Yet Carlyle was a man of letters, and so was Victor Hugo. Tolstoi was one, though so oddly warped a one in the end. Lesser but more amiable and still unmuted figures abound—Hebbel and Matthew Arnold and Jules Lemaitre. There is no need to multiply names and each student will select those most conformable to his taste and temper. The last quarter of the nineteenth century, moreover, saw the birth of a group of quite pre-eminent examples—of Paul Valery and Andre Gide and, above all, of that transcendent artist and noble servant of mankind, Thomas Mann.

American literature, which I deliberately left to the last, started out notably well. We had Emerson, luminous, acute, with a smaller but genuinely Goethean insight into the concrete as well as into the sum of things. We had the shapely prose of Thoreau embodying his cool uncompromising vision. We had, in a later generation, the extraordinary phenomenon of Henry James, an artist not wholly able to live up to his own genius through temperamental defects. But the bleak neglects under which he agonized and the eccentric character of his revival—not by any part, however small, of the nation, but by odd cliques and pseudo-esoteric tastes—these are already parts of the dark shadow under which we live. "The literary man in this country," Emerson wrote in his journal in 1836, "has no critic." That brief and laconic over-simplification tells the story of the many succeeding years. It tells the story of our own time. There is no criticism in America. Take that in its broadest sense from literary conversation by fire-side or at an inn; there are no critical reviews; there is no *valuing* public of any extent. There are a few academicians, like ourselves. There are the 900,000 poor "dumb driven cattle" of the Book of the Month Club; there is the vaster herd of the Literary Guild. The rest is silence.

## II

Emerson's complaint that the literary man in this country has no critic was uttered two years after Goethe's death. Wordsworth was at the peak of his influence, if not of his power. The French Romantic movement sent forth its rather dazzling rays. Though remote and pro-



vincial, America was within this world. There were people especially in New England, who vibrated to the same strings and so the succeeding years brought forth not only the poems and essays of Emerson but the writings of Thoreau, of Poe (who had only then another fifteen years to live) and of Hawthorne. And Emerson and Hawthorne, at least, made their way in their American world. They were able to create the taste by which they were gradually appreciated. The human world in this vast land was small. It has not, perhaps, been sufficiently emphasized that a cultivated and valuing minority functioned not ineffectively between, say, 1830 and the War between the States. It is clear today that Longfellow was a quite minor poet. But the immense popularity of even a Longfellow puts to shame an age which has found a substitute for him in Eddie Guest.

Neither Goethe, who entertained high hopes for America, nor Emerson could have foreseen the American cultural scene of today. For they could not have foreseen the liberalistic devaluation of values which set in roughly somewhere between 1859 and 1870 and against which only today a few solitary voices are being raised. They could not have foreseen the great and universal doctrine that it is the business of man in society to adapt himself to his environment, to be in no respect different from his fellows, to eschew the critical mood and the critical temper and to limit his effort to change his environment by the multiplication of mechanical gadgets. Least of all could they have foreseen a system of higher education—breached at this hour and, I pray about to crumble—in which a man, a citizen of the Republic, a member in good standing of the American Association of University Professors, could declare at a faculty meeting of a mighty university that poultry husbandry and the Attic drama were *equivalent* instrumentalities for the higher education of youth. Please mark the word “equivalent” which unblushingly he uttered. In that word he summed up what might well be called the prostitutional element of that liberalism which is no longer libertarianism. Because, according to it, let us not forget, it is heretical not to believe that everything is as good as everything else except two things—efficiency in making money or substituting metal or plaster devices for human effort and human thought.

To this audience I need hardly repeat the tale of the bitter and destructive consequences—the lowering of academic standards, the use of the higher education not as a sieve but as a cornucopia; the deeper and deeper intrusion of pre-professional preparation into the arts colleges, as though men were not men, needing knowledge of man and God, of beauty and righteousness, of good and of evil, but merely potential robots or machines in the guise of chemists or engineers or business administrators or even physicians. It is a melancholy and a

wretched story. Perhaps you will ask: what has it to do with the Man of Letters in American Culture? My answer is—everything.

The man of letters is primarily the man of values, the valuing man, the man of qualitative distinctions. As an artist he strives after perfection which he may define in sundry ways; as a thinker, as a teacher—and all the great poets and men of letters have been, however indirectly, teachers—he wants his vision of (to borrow the tag that Arnold was so fond of)—reason and the will of God to prevail. He may be rebel and inovator and desire to change or transvalue current values. In that case his emphasis on values is even more peremptory. But he cannot function in a society where among the vast majority of so-called literate people a bleak nihilism or denial of values prevails. He finds it increasingly hard, in truth, to account for the tough tenacity of the dull, lightless, miserable leavings of the decayed Enlightenment with that malice against man, which celebrated its final orgy in the Kinsey Report, and with the concept of progress as a multiplication of our present sins and evils. The only way he can account for its attractiveness is by remembering that it is the easiest way. It demands the exercise of neither faith nor reason; it asks for no active virtue; knowing no values, it liberates the lazy from the hardship of choice between the higher and the lower. It reminds him of the phrase of the French shopkeeper to the merely browsing customer: "*Regardez, Monsieur: ça n'engage a rien.*" It obligates people to nothing.

May I adduce quite briefly a few of the component elements of the cultural climate which would suffocate a man of letters, were he to arise among us?

People, especially the liberals, are very glib about the atomic age. They are the contemporaries of atomic fission and reason and react as though they were the contemporaries of Haeckel and Huxley in the darkest nineteenth century. In vain have they been told by Eddington and others that "the stuff of the world is mind-stuff" and that "all knowledge of our environment has entered in the form of messages transmitted along the nerves to the seat of consciousness." They will not learn that the only object of man's direct knowledge is his own soul and that hence there can be no change in the world until there is a change in the soul—in will, vision, temper. Bleakly and foolishly they use the cliché of mysticism for all such irrefutable reflections and continue on their irresponsible and disastrous way.

They cling with an equal stubbornness, of which the implications meet you in street and drawing room and pursue you, if you are a teacher, into your very classes, to what used to be called the Higher Criticism of the Bible and treat its conclusions as ascertained facts. The archaeological researches of Sir Leonard Woolley and others, the linguistic rectifications of Professor A. S. Yahuda, the entire re-construction

of the history of the Middle East are not permitted to seep into consciousness. In spite of the blood-drenched proof that, despite whatever discoveries in detail, the German heathens were wrong in every anterior assumption and therefore in every final conclusion, liberals of all sorts still treat as "reactionary" and—one of their favorite words: out-dated (as though dates had to do with truth)—our re-won knowledge of the inner authenticity and compelling force of the Torah of Israel. To admit this would create new obligations, both moral and intellectual and obligations are not exactly the liberals' dish of tea.

I come finally to the great anthropological fraud which, through the so-called social sciences, soaks the minds of broad strata of the pseudo-educated. It was started in America by the late Professor Franz Boas of Columbia, a Jew who was determined not to be a Jew and therefore determined that there should be *no* peculiar peoples and therefore determined—you see the line of reasoning—that man shall *not* have created his cultures in the image of his soul. I need go no farther than the popular book of his late brilliant pupil, Ruth Benedict's "Patterns of Culture." When I first read her book I thought the first sentence disfigured by a blighting printers' error. It reads: "anthropology is the study of human beings as creatures of society." "Creatures" seemed to me an obvious misprint for "creators." But the Boas "front" had to be at least ostensibly maintained. On page 253 Miss Benedict, who in her own person had some scruples, wrote: "No civilization has in it any element which in the last analysis is not the contribution of an individual." But she was badly frightened of the truths she could not avoid. What could be more admirable than her comparison of the *Gestalt* or configuration of a given culture to a style in art? Her qualms lead her into unconscious humor. "This integration of cultures," she wrote, "is not in the least mystical. It is the same process by which a style in art comes into being and persists." Note first that contemporary illiterate use of the word "mystical." Needless to say, Miss Benedict was thinking of neither Saint Theresa nor of the Zohar, the Book of Light. What do these liberals mean when they use "mystical" in a pejorative sense? I imagine they mean the ultimately inexplicable. But everything is that. Science knows the how, never the why. Man *knows* only the proximate and must grasp the ultimate by faith and vision. What, in this sense, could be more mystical than the character and rise of a style in art?

I come to the crucial point. Miss Benedict polemicises against those few who hold cultures to be created by human groups as the expression of the character of those groups. She calls this the "biological" interpretation. That again is darkest nineteenth century. For biologically men are all alike. They differ in their psychical appetences, habits and reactions. And so Miss Benedict avers that those who hold the "biological" view of the origin of cultures would have to



prove that human groups have different "basal metabolisms" and a varied "functioning of the ductless glands", and evidently did not see that the next question would be just as difficult, namely, how did these physiological variations come to be and what is the causal nexus between them and the styles or patterns of culture. In brief, the whole business would be as "mystical" as it was before. But even contemporary anthropologists have a vestigial conscience and so Miss Benedict gave the show away by unobtrusively using as the motto of her book a tremendous saying of the Digger Indians which contains the Alpha and Omega of the whole matter: "In the beginning God gave to every people a cup of clay, and from this cup they drank their life".

How deep these withered fallacies strike into the cultural life about us! Heretically, of course, from the point of view of the pseudo-liberals, including Mr. Kinsey, I tell my students that man is forever separated from the realm of nature not only by knowing himself as subject and the universe as object and remaining therefore the center about which the stars revolve, despite Copernicus. I tell them that man is torn out of the context of mere nature at least by language, by music, by mathematics. And in the eyes of some of these young people I see a troubled look. Their security is shaken. The universe is not a machine to which science holds the key. It is not a blue-print. Immortal forces clash in the human soul. Great creative choices among values are to be made. Moral obligations are to be incurred. Freedom is not to be prated about but exercised; progress, if there is such a thing, must be of the making of their wills.

### III

In the cultural climate I have described criticism, which the man of letters needs, as Emerson pointed out, is not likely to flourish. Not because there are no exact or rigid standards. We want no pseudo-classical set of rules. We need neither an Aristotle nor a Boileau. But if the critic has not chosen a set of values of some sort to which he adheres, however undulant and flexible their application, even an intelligent impressionism cannot be used. In point of fact a curious, wooden dogmatism seems to arise. Reviewers will say glibly in the face of any enlargement or new application of the form of the novel: "This is no novel". As though they, usually lazy liberals and therefore nihilists, held in their keeping the arch-type of the novel and could forbid deviations therefrom. Reviewers of poetry, on the other hand, have abandoned all curbs and intellectual obligations and indulge in a quite private jargon. Most significant of the negation of values is the fact that the same critical vocabulary is applied even in the better periodicals and papers to a serious work of art and to the latest

tale in which a handsome imbecile chases a deep-bosomed wench through the papier-mache trappings of a former century.

But I want to turn to a perfectly concrete example of all that I have indicated. An example of it in action. It is a review—I have already referred to it—by the top-flight reviewer of the daily edition of the greatest newspaper in America, if not in the world. I will not name his name; I would not wound or even annoy him. As my dear dead friend, that excellent poet, William Ellery Leonard, wrote in one of the driest of his early sonnets—dry, mind you, like sound Burgundy and not like chalk or the stories of the imitators of Ernest Hemingway:

The man himself could enter at my gate,  
Like any stranger, with his dog behind.

It is a book-review, then, of which I would speak. And the book reviewed is the last work of the greatest man of letters now alive on earth. It is Thomas Mann's "*Doctor Faustus: Being the Life of the German Composer Adrian Leverkuehn, as narrated by a Friend.*" It must be nearly a year since a copy of the German text published in Sweden reached me. I have read the book twice in its entirety; I have pondered certain pages again and again. It is indeed, as with a touch of irony, Dr. Mann wrote me, his "wildest book." It is a dark apocalyptic book; it is, as Goethe said of his Faust, incommensurable. It is story and apologue at the same time. It enlarges and transforms the novel as a form of art by what it is. It is tumultuous and strange. It cries and thunders. Why should it not? Did it ever before befall a great artist that he had to write the condemnation of his own people, of his flesh and blood and of all they had been and wrought for a thousand years? For Thomas Mann is not satisfied with denouncing that pact with Satan which the German people made in this century. Toward this pact, he says in effect, this people fared for ten bitter centuries. This event is indeed an event. Underground the foul fires were smouldering. From time to time they were whipped into flames. And even German God-seeking was not guiltless in bringing about the dreadful end, nor German music which Mann rightly, inevitably chooses as the sign and symbol of this people, as the special mark upon the brow of this Cain. And it is no wonder that in the voice of the narrator, the good, kind classicist, Serenus Zeitblom (note his name), the decent, helpless German fascinated all his life by the terrible genius and glittering decadence of Leverkuehn, there whispers and murmurs and weeps a half-choking: "The pity of it . . . the pity of . . ."

Of all this our cool and pert reviewer shows no consciousness. Did he read—could he read—the melancholy motto from the Inferno

with which Thomas Mann strikes a soft prelude: ". . . I, alone, was preparing myself to bear the war both of the journey and the pity, which memory, that errs not, shall relate. O Muses, O high Genius, now help me! O Memory, that has inscribed what I saw, here will be shown thy nobleness". The book, then, is the story of a hell-faring. Unlike Dante, Thomas Mann did not fare into the hell created by an imagination, however burning, but into a place—a real place—of ineffable horror, misery, crime and satanic sinfulness.

This is the work which came—in a quite inadequate translation, to be sure—to our reviewer's table. Had I been asked to review it even after a whole year's knowledge of it, I would still have begged for some further weeks of study; I would still have wanted, as it were, to fast and pray. Our reviewer, busy, imperturbable, sure that he knows it all, storms forward under full sail, no vestige of shame upon his brow or of humility within his heart. Thomas Mann, a novelist? "Little of his work," writes our reviewer, "has possessed the ordinary virtues of fiction". One is breathless. Not even *Buddenbrooks*, not even the novelettes from Tonio Kroeger and *Triestan* through *Death in Venice* and *Mario and the Magician*? Not even they? But what this reviewer, in our immediate cultural climate, does not dream is that the great masters do not aim after the "ordinary virtues" exhibited by the mass-production of a given genre in a given period. According to this measure, Milton should have been Cowley and, to descend many rungs of the ladder of excellence, Shaw should have been Pinero and Eugene O'Neill the late Augustus Thomas and Mr. Robert Frost should have been Robert Service. So Doctor Faustus, lacking, according to our reviewer, with the rest of Thomas Mann's work, "the ordinary virtues of fiction" is set down by him "as to be called a novel only by the loosest possible use of the term". How, one wonders, does our reviewer define the term—to include *Ulysses* and *Finnegan's Wake* and "*A la recherche du Temps perdu*"? Perhaps. For these works have a wide acceptance. He was not left alone with them on publication. Nor does he dream that Thomas Mann declared the novel to be in a state of crisis as a form of art many years ago and that very intelligent French publisher Bernard Grasset begged, not so long ago, that its neck be wrung. One feels like echoing that wish when one reads the thousandth, may I say zolaizing novel with its gilded—cheaply gilded—delineation of the working classes and its sociological implication which, once again, obligates the reader to nothing?

But I have not exhausted our reviewer's achievements. He talks of the book's "ponderous, pedantic way", of "imposing, turgid and frequently obscure dissertations" and of "woeful prolixity". Now one does not expect a newspaper reviewer to reach Thomas Mann in the original text nor even, a far slighter matter, Andre Gide. Yet a



man who reviews important books in a great paper three to four times a week ought, at least, to be aware of his own limitations and operate, as it were, within them. Translations are notoriously inadequate and the greater the stylist, the more inadequate they are likely to be. I have read an article by an intelligent and modest American who wanted to be told just how Thomas Mann wrote. He felt that the existing versions were below Mann's reputation as a stylist. Well, this is not the place to characterize that style, inseparable from substance, of course, as soul on earth from body—a perfect incarnation. But it may be said that the adjectives of our reviewer are the most foolish, quite literally so, that could be used. Thomas Mann's style has a high degree of periodicity, far more spontaneous, by the way, than that of Marcel Proust. But this periodicity is directed and controlled by a pervasive and ordered sense of musicality. Nor is that all. Mann is an elegant writer; he has a Latin, an un-German, if you like, a Vergilian tact and taste. The difficult passages, finally—and what writer seeking to interpret this age, can fail to be difficult—are rendered supremely attractive by the constant suffusion of the intellectual with the life-blood of concreteness, the seen, the heard, the felt.

You may say that I am making a great deal of the review of a single mediocre reviewer. Alas, that review is quite typical of the reception which the work of a man of letters receives among us in this age. The review of *Doctor Faustus* in the *New Yorker Magazine*, a publication not wholly devoid of literary sensibility, was almost as coarse, as lacking in humility. The man had read the book quite as belligerently, quite as devoid of the "wise passiveness" of Wordsworth's monition, quite as determined (with a kind of inverted snobishness) to make vulgarity and the *Saturday Evening Post* taste in fiction to prevail. These reviews, let me repeat, are typical; they have been typical for years. They represent a resistance, half conscious and half unconscious, to high power and high distinction. Exceptions to them, like Professor Harry Levin's review of *Doctor Faustus* in the *Sunday Times*, issue almost invariably and very significantly from academic sources.

Now we may agree with the observation which Matthew Arnold made so long ago (1864) that "the production of great works of literature and art is not at all epochs and under all conditions possible". Our age is one of unexampled moral deterioration, turbulent, confused, devoid of hope and order. And indeed our distinguished spirits in literature are all survivors from another age. Andre Gide is seventy-nine; Thomas Mann and Robert Frost are seventy-three; even Mr. Eliot is sixty. And so it may be best for us and most profitable to seek, following Matthew Arnold once again, "to make an intellectual situation of which the creative power can profitably avail itself."

Yet that is what we seem least able to do, in the total absence of serious criticism—pervasive valuing and criticising—which might create a kinder climate for the man of letters, were he to arise among us.

#### IV

On this negative note I would have to end, were it not for one circumstance—the existence of our institutes of higher education. Let no one think that I am merely pleading *pro domo*. I have not dwelt in that house for many years and I have but just taken up my dwelling in it again. But all during those years I said and wrote on many occasions that culture in the United States had practically withdrawn into the academies and was in the hands of a mandarinat which—I must be frank with you, too—did not always sufficiently guard and tend the sacred flame entrusted by destiny to its keeping. Concerning the fact, at least, there can be no doubt. There are no book-shops in our cities. On the French Main Street, as many of you know even in provincial towns in the Midi, there was and is not only *epicerie*, a *boucherie*, a *herboristerie* but also a *librairie*. Where are our shops? Even the streamlined chains are not book-shops. Ask in them for a classic outside of a current series. Ask for a *book*. All their counters hold are the trade-goods, the merchandise of the hour. If a book—it might be a masterpiece—hasn't sold out by inventory time or even before, back it goes to the publisher or jobber. The "trade" knows only *ephemeridae*.

We have no book-shops. We have no Reviews. Try to sell a critical study of a writer. Try to have it printed for nothing. It can't be done. There is no place. Criticism is confined to reviewing, and I have illustrated the character of nine-tenths of all reviewing. I have not even remarked upon certain more ignominious elements in the practise of reviewing. I have an important book coming out in the spring. I have only one neck and I need it in my business. Nor have we cafes where literary conversation, the most fruitful kind of criticism, can be heard. I know of one—just one. It is on Second Avenue in New York and the conversation is in the Yiddish language. There the new poets are discussed. At publishers' teas or cocktail parties prices for merchandise are discussed—prices from magazines or film-companies. The quips of Bennet Cerf are repeated and relished. There are no *salons*, as there were in Berlin in better days. Goethe's glory was nurtured by Berlin hostesses a hundred and twenty-five years ago and Rainer Maria Rilke's in what, but for unspeakable crime and distaster, would seem but a few short years behind us.

We have no book-shops; we have no reviews; we have no salons. We have—what have we as the single instrumentality for the preserva-

tion and the passing on of culture and of values? We have the college classroom. We have nothing else. I need not tell you how that college classroom has been assaulted through the years and what various forces have battered at it to keep it from its true function as the preserver of culture and of values. The professional pedagogues, the cultivators of teaching-techniques without character or content have battered it; the vocational educationists (most dreadful of all those tribes) have tried to over-run it; so-called progressives have sought to destroy it root and branch; opportunist politicians have clamored for the lowering of standards to the least common denominator of the offspring of their constituents. The monstrous waves of the malicious attempt to destroy quality for the sake of quantity have gone over it. The hatred of the lower for the higher forms of life has been upon its door-step. The wonder is not that the higher education in America is bruised and sore; the wonder is that it exists. The greater wonder is the college teachers have in quite recent years arisen and turned upon the rabble and upon their tormentors and have declared that the eternal humanities are the proper and permanent instrumentalities for the education of youth.

Luckily there exists among the American people a half-pathetic faith in education. A good deal of it is very impure, since it looks upon education merely as a tool of economic and social competition. But it exists. It has grown. It has finally increased our college population to the staggering figure of more than two millions. Of course, a good many of these boys and girls have slipped into college through the too large meshes of a fraudulent net. Thousands of them are not educable in any true sense. Enough and more than enough remain to be persuaded to some measure of disinterestedness, some not wholly superficial sense of the meaning of value, some freedom from the servitude to materialistic superstition, some feeling of responsibility for the culture of their country, some aspiration beyond the collecting of fees and the multiplication of vain devices.

In his beautifully serene old age Thomas Jefferson wrote a letter in which he observed that, as men seemed to be born Aristotelians or Platonists, so they seemed to be born with a leaning to the rule in a state either of the common people or of the *aristoi*, the best. Now these two leanings or policies can, in actual practice, be combined. A democracy needs and uses influences and leaders. The influences and leaders exist; they are active; we have but to regard them to see the enormous function of a humanistic education in America. From those two millions of college students, or from some fraction of them, it is for us to select the *aristoi*, the best—the best not, needless to say, by the test of lineage or property, but by the single pure and ultimate test of God's grace. It is for these best to attempt to refashion



the temper of our society, to create gradually an intellectual and spiritual climate in conformity to the true lights which this age has found and to blend with these lights the flame of the torch of the undying tradition of man's spirit. A period of criticism, of clearing the air, of establishing right values, may then ensue, from which one day the poet and the man of letters may arise.









